WOMEN IN THE B.C. LABOUR MARKET

A Statistical Sketch

Prepared by:
Women's Secretariat
with assistance from the
Labour Market Policy Branch

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Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Labour Force Participation and Employment 2
Employment by Occupation and Industry 6
Job Tenure 10
Part-time Employment 12
Earnings 14
Further Reading 17

Introduction

On November 23, 1981, the Honourable Henry Bell-Irving, then Lieutenant-Governor of B.C., read from the throne speech:

> *"Perhaps no single change has had as great an impact on the work world and on society in general as the growth in female labour-force participation. Today, one of every two women of working age is in the labour force, comprising nearly 42 percent of workers. Two-income families are becoming prevalent in our society. The rapidity with which this change is occurring is presenting governments everywhere with an obligation to act to enrich and to support these developments so as to benefit fully from the skills, energies and productivity of all our people."*

Since this speech was given, female participation in the labour force has continued to grow. The Women's Secretariat, established as Women's Programs following an announcement in the same throne speech, has followed this growth with interest. As part of its efforts to collect data and produce reports relevant to women's issues, the Secretariat has prepared this statistical sketch of women in the B.C. labour market. It includes data on:

- labour force participation and employment,
- employment by occupation and industry,
- job tenure,
- part-time employment, and
- earnings.

For a more detailed look at women in the B.C. labour market, consult the publications listed on the last page.

Labour Force Participation & Employment Rate

Women have been playing an increasingly greater role in the British Columbia labour force (Table 1). Between 1978 and 1988, their participation rate rose from 48.7% to 56.5%. The greatest increases in participation were made among women 25 to 44 years old.

TABLE 1. B.C. Labour Force Participation Rate by Age Group

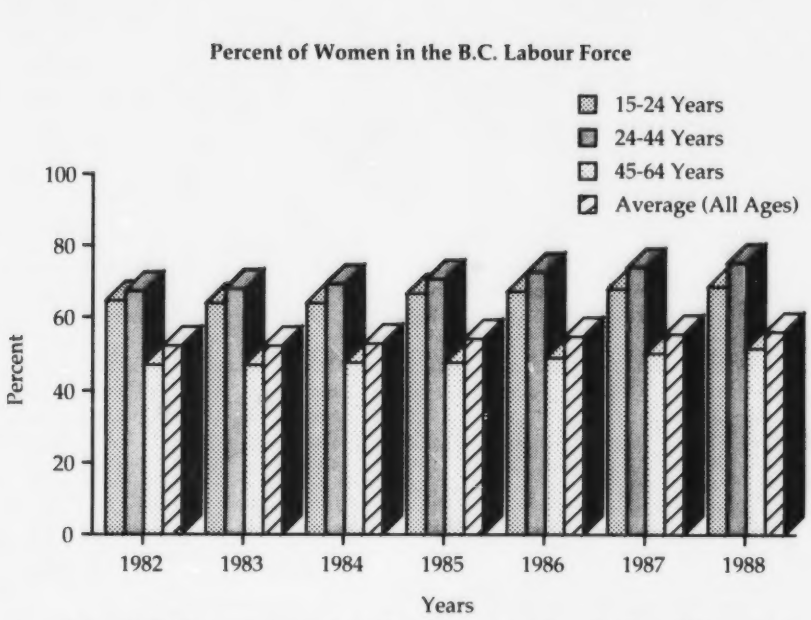
Percent in the Labour Force									
	Women							Men	
Age	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1987	1988
15-19	57.2	55.4	52.2	55.8	58.4	59.1	61.5	59.5	58.8
20-24	71.3	71.7	74.0	75.7	76.1	77.0	76.4	89.2	87.7
25-34	66.6	68.1	68.9	69.9	72.7	73.5	73.4	95.7	94.1
35-44	68.3	68.0	70.9	70.2	72.6	74.7	77.6	95.9	96.2
45-54	59.8	62.5	61.8	62.7	62.3	64.9	67.7	94.2	92.6
55-64	34.4	32.2	33.1	32.9	34.8	35.5	34.5	63.8	64.9
65+	3.1	2.8	3.2	3.8	3.5	2.6	3.4	9.6	8.2
Avg. (All Ages)	**52.4**	**52.5**	**53.1**	**54.0**	**54.9**	**55.6**	**56.5**	**76.1**	**75.2**

Note: People, 15 years and over, are considered to be in the labour force if they are either employed or unemployed (actively seeking a job, expecting to return to a job from which they have been laid off, or about to report to a job). The participation rate is the labour force - or some part of it - as a percentage of the population - or some part of it.

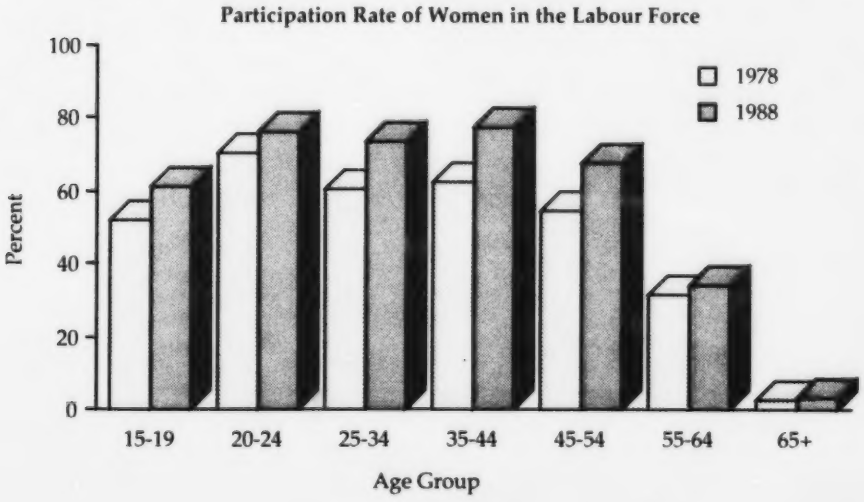
Note: Statistics for 1981 on are revised on the basis of the 1986 Census.

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Annual Averages*, Catalogue No. 71-529 and *The Labour Force*, Catalogue No. 71-001.

Among women aged 15 to 24, increases in labour force participation have been less significant. For many of these women, school has been an alternative to the labour force. The economic rewards for increased education, and the already high levels of labour force participation among women aged 20 to 24, may also have accounted for the small increase in their participation in the labour force.



As might be expected at the job-entry level, the difference between male and female participation rates was very small (2.7%) in the age group 15 to 19 years in 1987. The sex difference was greatest for those 45 to 64 years of age. Many women in this age group have not entered the labour force; they have worked solely at home.



Between 1978 and 1988, the annual growth rate in both the labour force and employment has been greater for women than it has been for men.

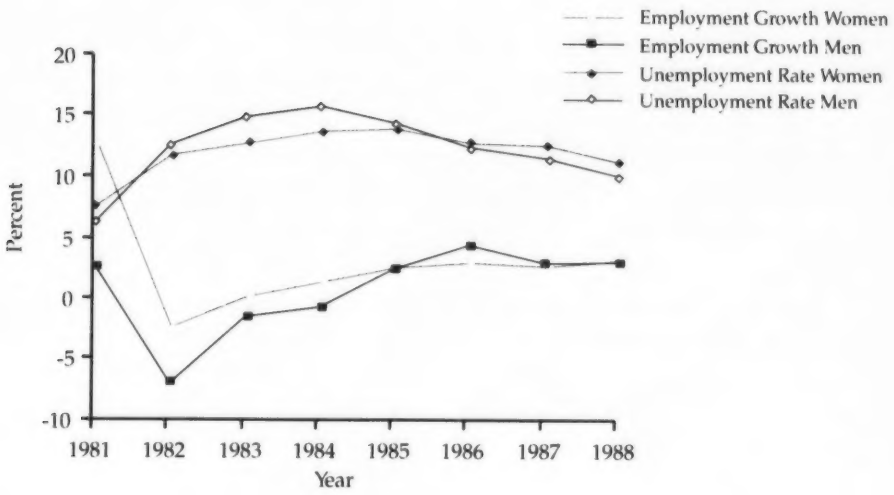
TABLE 2. B.C. Labour Force and Employment Growth, 1981-1988

	Women					Men				
	Labour Force Growth		Employment Growth		Unempl. Rate	Labour Force Growth		Employment Growth		Unempl. Rate
Year	000's	%	000's	%	%	000's	%	000's	%	%
1981	555	7.6	512	12.7	7.7	806	2.7	757	2.3	6.0
1982	567	2.2	500	-2.3	11.7	801	-0.6	702	-7.3	12.4
1983	574	1.2	501	0.2	12.8	806	0.6	689	-1.8	14.5
1984	589	2.6	508	1.4	13.8	807	0.1	683	-0.9	15.4
1985	606	2.9	521	2.6	14.0	814	0.9	698	2.2	14.2
1986	622	2.7	543	4.2	12.8	829	1.9	727	4.2	12.2
1987	641	3.1	561	3.3	12.5	841	1.5	745	2.5	11.4
1988	666	3.9	592	5.5	11.1	849	1.0	766	2.8	9.8

Note: Statistics for 1981 onward are revised on the basis of the 1986 census.
Source: Statistcs Canada, *Labour Force Annual Averages*, Catalogue No. 71-529 and *The Labour Force*, Catalogue No. 71-001.

Fluctuations in unemployment rates have been less pronounced for women. During normal economic times, women's unemployment rates have been higher than men's; however, during less buoyant economic times, women have had lower unemployment rates (note the lower rates for women between 1982 and 1985 in Table 2).

Employment Growth and Unemployment Rate



Sex differences in unemployment rates may have been influenced by the different proportions of women and men in the various industries and occupations (Table 3). For instance, economic downturns have generally been felt more in primary, processing and construction jobs. Those jobs have been filled by a greater percentage of men than women (see *Employment by Occupation and Industry*). Further, difficult economic times may have caused employers to reduce hours for part-time staff rather than lay them off; more women than men have been working at part-time jobs (see *Part-Time Employment*) and, therefore, have avoided being laid off.

EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION AND INDUSTRY

In 1988, more than 50% of the women in the British Columbia labour force were in either the clerical or service occupational categories. Also, the proportion of women in each of these two categories was significantly greater than the proportion of men (Table 3).

TABLE 3. B.C. Labour Force by Major Occupational Categories 1978-1988

Occupational Category	Women in the Labour Force					Men in the Labour Force		
	000's				%	000's		%
	1978	1983	1987	1988	1988	1987	1988	1988
Managerial, Professional & Administration	110	143	185	189	28.4	221	224	26.4
Clerical	164	189	186	201	30.2	40	39	4.6
Sales	54	67	71	79	11.9	86	85	10.0
Service	96	124	134	133	20.0	88	88	10.4
Primary	11	16	16	17	2.6	65	67	7.9
Processing	21	18	23	22	3.3	138	141	16.6
Construction, Transportation and Related Occ.	4	5	5	4	0.6	153	159	18.7
Material Handling	7	9	8	9	1.4	45	41	4.8
Other	4	6	10	8	1.2	6	4	0.5
Total	**471**	**577**	**639**	**666**	**100.0**	**841**	**849**	**100.0**

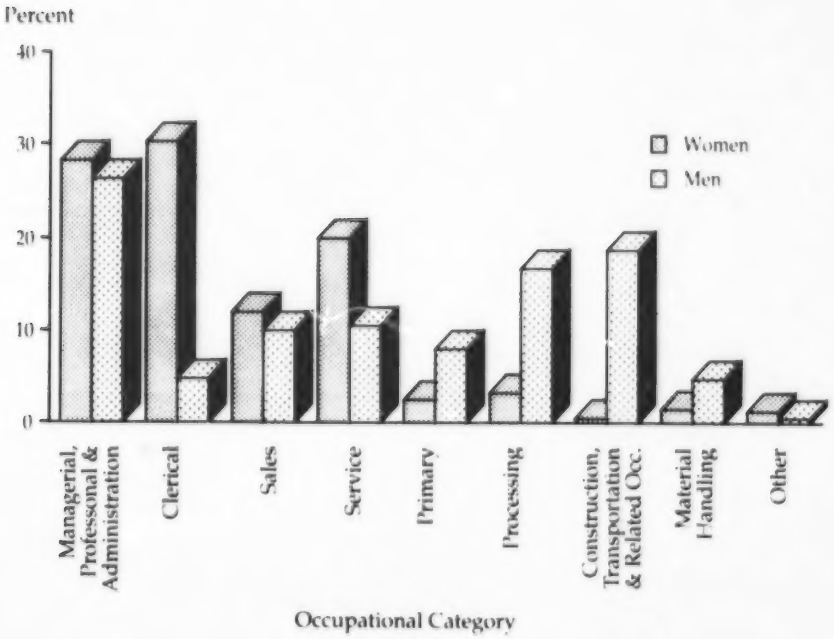
Note: Most numbers (or numbers used to calculate percentages) have been rounded. As a result, not all numbers will amount to the exact total presented, nor will all percentages amount to the exact figures indicated.

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Annual Averages*, Catalogue No. 71-529 and *The Labour Force*, Catalogue No. 71-001.

Women were seriously under-represented in the four occupational categories considered to be non-traditional for women:

- primary (primary products occupations such as farming, trapping, mining and fishing);
- processing (occupations concerned with refining, mixing, compounding, chemical treatment, conditioning or similarly working with materials);
- construction, transportation and related occupations; and
- material handling (occupations concerned with moving, lifting, loading and packaging material and products).

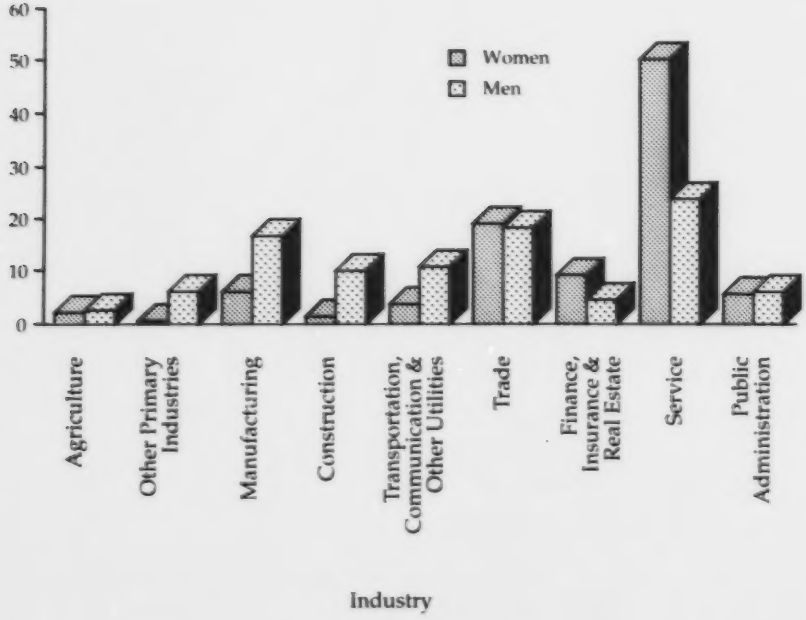
B.C. Labour Force by Major Occupational Categories



Further, the number of women in these occupational categories has increased very slowly between 1978 and 1988. This may have been related to factors such as attitudes or lack of trained women in these areas. However, it was also likely related to the growth of employment in industries that were over-represented by women, particularly the service industries.

The largest increase in the female labour force between 1983 (the end of the recession, according to Statistics Canada) and 1988 took place in managerial, professional and administrative jobs. This increase accounted for about two-thirds of the total increase in the female labour force. Note also that a greater proportion of women than men occupied jobs in this category in 1988.

B.C. Employment by Industry



Women's employment by industry followed a pattern similar to women's employment by occupational categories. Table 4 shows that there were more women than men in only two industries in 1988: finance, insurance and real estate; and service. Women were particularly under-represented in:

- other primary industries;
- manufacturing;
- construction; and
- transportation, communication and other utilities.

TABLE 4. B.C. Employment by Industry, 1987

	Women		Men	
Industry	**Employed 000's**	**% of All Women Employed**	**Employed 000's**	**% of All Men Employed**
Agriculture	13	2.2	21	2.8
Other Primary Industries	5	0.9	47	6.1
Manufacturing	37	6.3	129	16.9
Construction	10	1.7	77	10.1
Transportation, Communication & Other Utilities	24	4.1	83	10.8
Trade	114	19.3	140	18.3
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	56	9.5	36	4.7
Service	300	50.7	184	24.0
Public Administration	34	5.8	49	6.4
Total	**592**	**100.0**	**766**	**100.0**

Note: Most numbers (or numbers used to calculate percentages) have been rounded. As a result, not all numbers will amount to the exact total presented, nor will all percentages amount to the exact figures indicated.

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Annual Averages*, Catalogue No. 71-529 and *The Labour Force*, Catalogue No. 71-001

JOB TENURE

For any period of tenure under 10 years, there was a greater percentage of women than men in 1988 (Table 5). However, the proportion of men with job tenure over 10 years was significantly greater than the proportion of women . This may be partly explained by many women's temporary absence from the labour force during child-bearing years.

TABLE 5. B.C. Employment by Job Tenure, 1988

	Women		Men	
Job Tenure	**000's**	**% of Total Women Employed**	**000's**	**% of Total Men Employed**
1-3 months	83	14.0	84	11.0
4-6 months	51	8.6	54	7.1
7-12 months	65	11.0	66	8.6
1-5 years	177	29.9	207	27.0
6-10 years	110	18.6	134	17.5
11-20 years	87	14.7	151	19.7
20+ years	19	3.2	69	9.0
Total	592	100.0	766	100.0

Note: Most numbers (or numbers used to calculate percentages) have been rounded. As a result, not all numbers will amount to the exact total presented, nor will all percentages amount to the exact figures indicated.

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Annual Averages*, Catalogue No. 71-529 and *The Labour Force*, catalogue No. 71-001.

Employment by Job Tenure, 1988
Women

Employment by Job Tenure, 1988
Men

PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

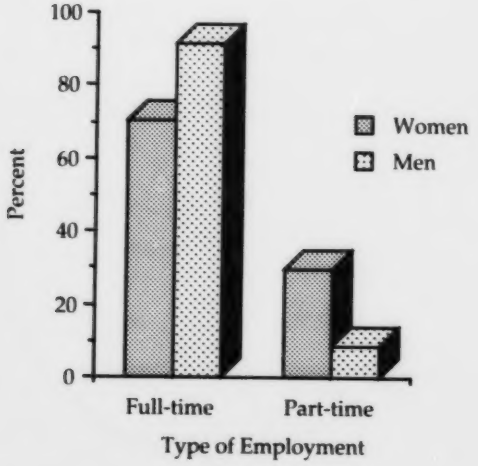
In 1988, part-time work played a greater role in women's employment than it did in men's (Table 6). Almost 30% of employed women held part-time jobs compared to less than 10% of employed men.

TABLE 6. B.C. Part-time and Full-time Employment, 1988

	Women		Men	
Type of Employment	**000's**	**% of Women Employed**	**000's**	**% of Men Employed**
Full-time	415	70.2	699	91.4
Part-time	176	29.8	66	8.6
Total	591	100.0	765	100.0

Note: Part-time employment means less than 30 hours of work per week.
Source: Statistics Canada, *The Labour Force*, Catalogue No. 71-529.

B.C. Part-time and Full-time Employment, 1988



A 1986 survey of labour market experience helped to explain attitudes towards part-time work. Table 7 shows that a smaller proportion of women under 25 than over was satisfied with the number of hours worked at part-time jobs. However, 20.9% of the younger group wanted to continue working at part-time jobs. Only 17.6% wanted full-time employment. The fact that many women in the age group 16-24 years are attending school or other educational institutions may have accounted for some of the preference for part-time work. Family obligations may also have partly accounted for the proportion in both age groups that preferred to continue in part-time jobs.

TABLE 7. B.C. Women: Satisfaction with Hours Worked in Paid Employment at Part-time Jobs, 1986

	Satisfied With Hours	Dissatisfied With Hours	
Age Group	(% of Age Group)	Want to Work Full-time (% of Age Group)	Want to Continue Part-time (% of Age Group)
16-24 years	61.5	17.6	20.9
25-64 years	68.7	15.3	16.6

Source: Statistics Canada, *Canada's Women: A Profile of Their 1986 Labour Market Experience*, Catalogue 71-205 Annual, 1988.

EARNINGS

Women's earnings have risen steadily during the 1980s (Table 8). However, as a percentage of men's earnings, women's earnings are still low. There has been, however, a sizable increase in women's earnings compared to 1970 when women were making only 56.6% of what men earned.

TABLE 8. B.C. Average Earnings

Year	Average Earnings	
	Fully-employed Women $	Women's Earnings as a % of Fully-employed Men's Earnings
1970	4 987	56.6
1980	14 723	61.7
1982	17 389	62.5
1984	18 965	64.7
1986	19 996	63.2
1987	21 923	66.7

Note: Fully-employed refers to employment on a full-time, full-year basis.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Earnings of Men and Women*, Catalogue No. 13-217 and *Women in the Workplace, Selected Data*, Catalogue No. 71-534

Average Earnings of Fully-employed Women

Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Fully-employed Men's Earnings

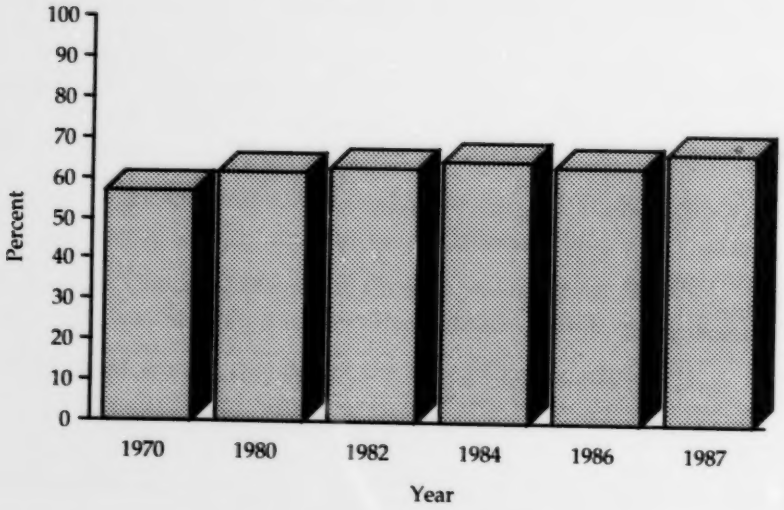


Table 9 shows that, in 1986, women in managerial and professional occupations had the highest earnings.

In every occupational category for which there was information, women in unions earned significantly more than non-unionized women. In the processing occupations, unionized women earned twice the amount that non-unionized women earned.

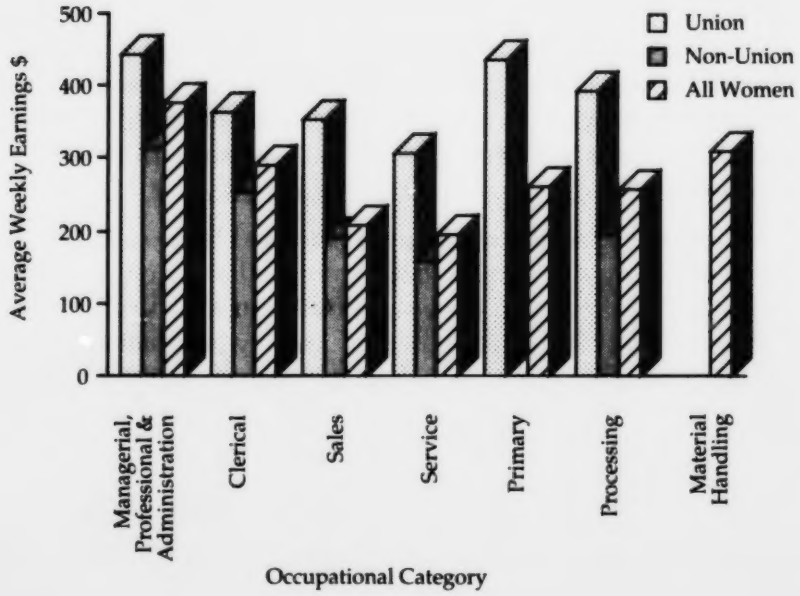
There were more women in service jobs (Tables 3 and 4), the lowest paying category for both unionized and non-unionized women. Also, women were significantly under-represented in primary, processing and material handling occupations (Table 3), each higher-paying categories.

TABLE 9. B.C. Average Weekly Earnings for Women by Occupation and Union Membership, 1986

Occupational Category	Union $	Non-union $	All Women $
Managerial & Professional	445	315	378
Clerical	363	256	290
Sales	353	193	210
Service	308	158	195
Primary	436	—	261
Processing	394	197	259
Material Handling	—	—	311
Construction & Transportation	—	—	—

Note: Dashes indicate that the sample size was too small to produce reliable figures.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Canada's Women: A Profile of Their 1986 Labour Market Experience*, Catalogue 71-205 Annual, May 1988.

B.C. Average Weekly Earnings for Women by Occupation and Union Membership, 1986



FURTHER READING

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